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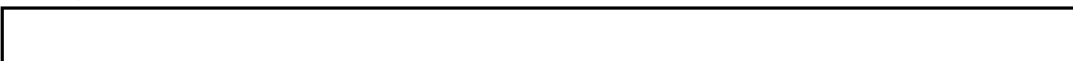
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USSR-US

Moscow continues to offer public and private assurances that collapse of the US-Soviet trade agreement does not signal a turn from detente. At the same time, criticism of the US in Soviet news media remains truculent.

In a conversation with a US diplomat earlier this week, L. M. Maksudov, an official in the Soviet Foreign Ministry, spoke of the USSR's great disappointment with the terms of the recent US trade legislation. He characterized the language of the legislation, especially the reference to "non-market economies," as contrary to normal international conduct.

Maksudov, head of the information division that transmits policy guidance to Soviet embassies, may have been drawing directly from the official line in contrasting the setback on trade with the rapport established between President Ford and General Secretary Brezhnev at their November summit meeting.

The Soviet press continues to affirm Moscow's commitment to detente and to give heavy coverage to recent public statements by President Ford and Secretary Kissinger that detente will be continued and strengthened. The press has also resumed frequent and positive coverage of the strategic arms control understandings achieved at the November summit.

Moscow's evident interest in preserving and extending its policy of improved relations with the US has nevertheless not prevented it from reacting sharply in certain cases. Despite prompt US apologies for a shooting incident at the Ukrainian UN mission in New York last weekend, the official Soviet protest delivered Wednesday was extremely sharp.

The note, broadcast in its entirety in the USSR and published in all of the principal Soviet newspapers, said unfulfilled US assurances of preventative action constitute "virtual connivance with criminal elements."

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Critical coverage of the US remains at the high levels of the past month. The Soviets are concentrating their propaganda attacks on domestic economic problems, US policy toward the Middle East, alleged abuses by the US intelligence community, and continued US support of South Vietnam.

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USSR-MBFR

Oleg Khlestov, the chief Soviet delegate to the force reduction negotiations, talked with Ambassador Stoessel on Monday about the fifth round of the negotiations, scheduled to begin next week in Vienna.

Khlestov expressed optimism and said the Soviets are still interested in reaching an agreement. He gave no indication, however, of any new Soviet flexibility. Instead, Khlestov called for the US to put pressure on its allies to move the negotiations along.

The Soviet negotiator concentrated on reiterating standard Soviet positions. He stressed the need for West Germany to participate in a reduction agreement from the outset, arguing that it is especially important to resolve this issue during 1975, the 30th anniversary of the end of World War II. This appeal prompted Ambassador Stoessel to ask whether the Warsaw Pact had not, in fact, already agreed to initial reductions limited to US and Soviet forces. Khlestov explained that the concession on this point had been made in the particular context of the Warsaw Pact's proposal of October 15 for symbolic reductions.

When asked about the NATO objective of reaching a "common ceiling," Khlestov did not reject the concept outright, but repeated the usual Soviet argument that Moscow could not accept an agreement that put it at a disadvantage. He said any reductions should consider total "firepower"; the Soviets do not want reductions limited to ground forces. He perhaps was also suggesting that Moscow eventually would be willing to accept unequal reductions of ground forces if the reductions are accompanied by cuts in air and nuclear elements.

Khlestov explained that the Warsaw Pact proposal of November 1973--to reduce each side's forces by approximately 15 percent--was still alive and had not been overtaken by attempts to win acceptance of various concepts of token reductions.

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SOMALIA

The government's execution of ten disgruntled Muslim leaders on January 23 is likely to increase domestic unrest as well as jeopardize Somalia's current efforts to obtain financial aid from conservative Arab states.

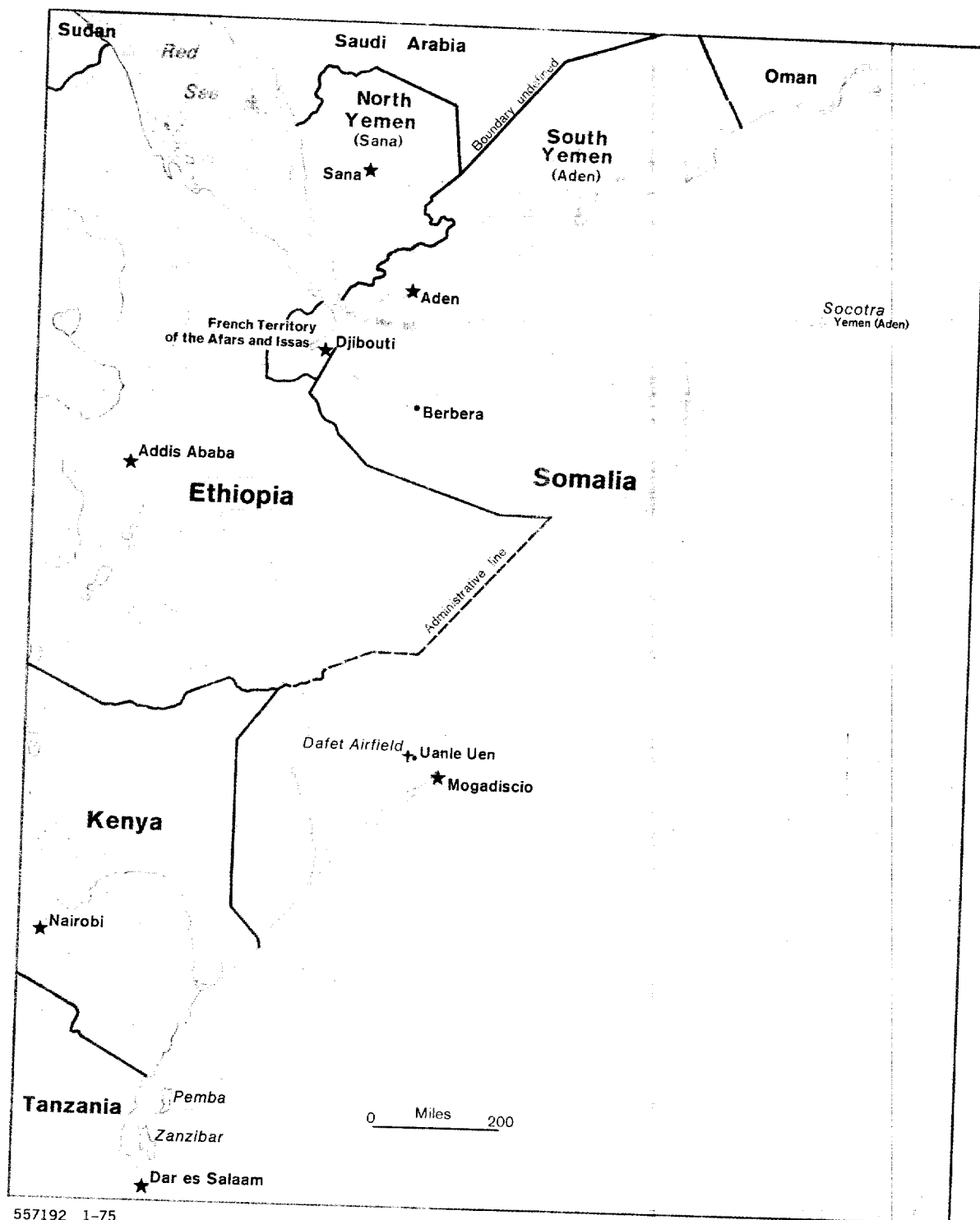
The executed religious leaders were arrested earlier this month--along with others now serving lengthy prison terms--for speaking out against a government decree granting equal rights to women. In announcing the government's policy on January 11, President Siad spoke unflatteringly of Koranic regulations concerning social and economic life and said inequality of the sexes, in matters such as marriage, divorce, and rights of inheritance, is inconsistent with "scientific socialism," the regime's vague political philosophy. The government's relations with conservative Muslims were already strained because of Mogadiscio's socialist policies and its ties to the Soviet Union.

The Siad government may have misjudged the reaction to its decree. Numerous incidents between the police and conservative Muslims occurred during the roundup of religious leaders and the closure of some mosques. Before the death sentences were carried out, the US embassy described the situation as the most overt demonstration of opposition since the early days of the five-year-old military regime.

The execution of the religious leaders, carried out by firing squad, is not likely to help matters. The government's internal security apparatus is strong, however, and until now has cowed most Somalis. Protest demonstrations could certainly occur today unless the government prohibits or closely monitors Friday's traditional mosque sermons. The army is on alert; it is unclear how it would react if called upon to deal with civilian demonstrators.

The government's confrontation with the Muslims was poorly timed. The foreign minister is currently on an extended swing through the Arab world in an effort

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to drum up economic aid for the drought-stricken country. Both the decree on equality and the executions will most certainly cause King Faysal and other Arab heads of state to take a hard look at Somali aid requests.

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THAILAND

Thailand will go to the polls on Sunday to elect a parliament--and indirectly a government. The election concludes a 15-month-long transition from military to parliamentary rule.

The US embassy predicts that no one party will gain an absolute majority, but that four conservative parties will win the largest bloc of seats, with the Social Justice Party, backed by army strong man Krit Siwara, leading the pack. Thus the new government is expected to be a conservative coalition.

If these forecasts prove accurate, Krit, who is also supporting two other conservative parties, will remain the power behind the scenes, and the military will retain its considerable influence over the government. Politicians will find it difficult to form any government that will last very long without Krit's blessing.

Regardless of who becomes prime minister, there is little chance that the new government will radically alter Thai domestic or foreign policies. On the domestic front, the new government will have to grapple with nagging economic issues such as inflation and land reform. In the foreign policy field, it will want to preserve Thailand's close relationship with the US, while at the same time appearing responsive to domestic pressures for greater independence of the US. The new government would thus probably be reluctant to give active support to US policy objectives in Indochina if this would seriously set back Thailand's efforts to improve relations with its neighbors, particularly Hanoi and Peking.

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OAS

The special OAS meeting on the US Trade Reform Act ended last night with a judgment against the US.

The permanent council declared that the act violates US commitments to developing countries, and resolved to pursue the issue at the next OAS general meeting, which will be held in April. The council also recommended that the OAS general secretariat study in detail the probable effect of the act on Latin America. The vote was 20 in favor of the resolution, none against, and two absent, with the US abstaining.

Attitudes toward continuing the inter-American dialogue--informal sessions between Latin American and Caribbean foreign ministers and the US secretary of state--will probably clarify soon. At last reading, both Ecuador and Venezuela seemed disposed to withdraw from the next session, set for March in Buenos Aires. Other governments have been debating the merits and pitfalls of that forum as well. Various subregional blocs, such as the Andean and Caribbean countries, will probably consult among themselves before individual governments finally commit themselves to attending the Buenos Aires meeting.

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NORTH YEMEN

The head of the ruling command council, Colonel Ibrahim al-Hamdi, yesterday asked Abd al-Aziz Abd al-Ghani, a young economist with no political following and a reputation as a pragmatist, to form a new government.

Abd al-Ghani, formerly director of the central bank, succeeds Muhsin al-Ayni, who was abruptly dismissed last week. Al-Ayni was opposed by conservative tribal sheikhs and religious leaders and by the Saudi government, which is deeply involved in North Yemeni politics.

Hamdi's selection of Abd al-Ghani was probably influenced by a desire to avoid giving the post to a potential rival and to maintain a middle-of-the-road posture in North Yemeni politics. Hamdi resisted pressures from domestic conservatives and probably also from Riyadh to install a rightist government, in part to avoid the charge that he is bringing North Yemen openly into the Saudi orbit. Abd al-Ghani will probably be acceptable to leftists in the government and armed forces who have been unhappy with the removal of Al-Ayni.

In any event, Hamdi's strong support in the military and the tribes makes it unlikely that Al-Ayni and his allies will risk a showdown with the regime.



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JORDAN

Infusions of Arab aid together with record foreign exchange earnings from Jordan's major industry--phosphate production--will put Amman on a pay-as-you-go basis for both defense and development goals in 1975.

Arab transfer payments in 1975 will probably exceed \$340 million, or over two and a half times the level of support received last year from Arab sources. US budget and military support for 1975 will push total payments to Jordan to more than \$500 million.

King Faysal, during his recent visit, gave King Husayn Saudi Arabia's portion--\$51 million--of the \$175-million fund established for Jordan at the Rabat summit meeting in October. Faysal also presented the Jordanians with an additional \$57 million to face "urgent and necessary requirements." The annual Khartoum payments from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait will total approximately \$79 million during 1975. Other scheduled gifts and budget support aid, primarily from Gulf States, will total \$31 million.

The upturn in Jordan's fortunes this year does not stem solely from foreign assistance payments. Earnings from phosphate exports, which totaled \$60 million during 1974, are expected to reach \$150 million this year. World demand for phosphate fertilizers is soaring. Jordan's sales to this rising market will be limited only by internal transportation bottlenecks that cannot be alleviated until late in the year.

The aid windfalls and expected sharp rise in export earnings will more than offset the large defense and development outlays programmed by Amman this year. In fact, Jordan may post a \$50-million balance-of-payments surplus after meeting the 1975 targets of the newly announced four-year defense plan and the final year of the three-year development plan.

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DENMARK

Danish Prime Minister Hartling yesterday told the new parliament, elected on January 9, that he will continue to lead a single-party minority liberal government.

This situation was forced on Hartling when he failed to find a coalition partner after protracted negotiations during the past two weeks. His prospects for holding power are dim; in his negotiations with the other parties he ran into opposition not only on his controversial economic salvage program, but also on the new government's budget.

If the proposals are voted down next week, Hartling probably will have to resign, opening the door either to another election or to an attempt by the Social Democrats to form a government. Hartling is gambling that either prospect will be so distasteful to the other parties that a sufficient number will rally to his program.

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